BPYC-101

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY:

PERSPECTIVES, ISSUES AND EARLY HISTORY

SCHOOL OF INTER-DISCIPLINARY AND TRANS-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES (SOITS)

INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI

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Course Introduction

This course introduces the nature of philosophy and outlines the fundamentals of Indian Philosophy and Greek philosophy. The course covers the basic concepts and preumptions of the Vedas, Upanisads, Lokāyata, Early Buddhism, Jainism, Epics, Pre-Socratic Philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Helenistic Philosophers and Neo-Platonic Philosophers. This course is essential as it lays a background for further philosophical studies and also serves as an introductory overview to studies in metaphysics, epistemology and moral philosophy. The objective of this core course is to introduce philosophy from various thematic contexts and also build on basic concepts and their analysis in Philosophy.

The BA (Major) Philosophy Course is, a six credit course, designed for learner to have a holistic understanding of the basics of the discipline of Philosophy. The first course is **BPYC-101**: **Introduction to Philosophy: Perspectives, Issues and Early History** which covers the fundamentals of Philosophy, Ancient Indian philosophy and Greek Philosophy. There are 21 units in this course, which are divided into six blocks. The first block titled **Introduction to Philosophy** is an entry point into Philosophy as it first introduces the basic concepts and then delves into how the ancient Indian Philosophy and Greek Philosophy form the backbone of the discipline in their cultural scenario respectively. This block helps you to understand the differences between Western and Indian philosophical traditions, and the aims of philosophy differently perceived by the Western and Indian thinkers.

Second block is Indian Scriptures: Philosophy and Aim. In this block, you are exposed to the sources of Indian culture. In this block learner will study the fundamentals of Vedas, Upanisads, and other Indian scriptures as well as different approaches to the idea of libration.

The subject-matter of **Block III** is the *Upaniṣads*. The *Upaniṣads* are Hindu scriptures that constitute the core teachings of Vedānta (etymologically: the end of the *Vedas*). They do not belong to any particular period of Sanskrit literature: the oldest, such as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads*, date to the late *Brāhmaṇa* period (around the middle of the first millennium BCE), while the latest were composed in the medieval and early modern period. The *Upaniṣads* have exerted an important influence on the rest of Indian Philosophy, and were collectively considered one of the 100 most influential books ever written by the British poet Martin Seymour-Smith. The philosopher and commentator Śaṁkara is thought to have composed commentaries on eleven mukhya or principal *Upaniṣads*, those that are generally

regarded as the oldest, spanning the late Vedic and Mauryan periods. Vedānta philosophy has many interpretations to it as seen in the Advaita (non-dual) tradition, the Dvaita (dual), the Visistadvaita (qualified non-duality) interpretations through various philosophers. In this block you will study philosophical theories and arguments of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, Kaṭha, Chāndogya* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.

The discussion-matter of **Block IV** deals with some of the philosophical approaches. In this block we have chose Nāsdīya Sūkta, Lokāyata tradition, Buddhism, Jainism and Epics. The aim of this block is to enable learner to grasp and to understand the philosophical questions and perspctives to deal such type of questions. The relevance of Indian scripture in Philosophy takes us to the unit named "**Philosophy of the Epics"**. In the ancient Indian tradition, there are three main texts that Hindu religion and philosophy rely on: the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and the *Bhagvad Gīta* along with other texts. There is a deep rooted relationship between philosophy and literature — and many aspects of the Hindu moral philosophy like that of the Puruṣārthas, goals of liberation, theory of karma and so on — are influenced by ancient Indian literature.

Block V presents the philosophical questions raised by early Greek philosophers. In this block learner will be able to grasp and understand the philosophical positions and perspectives of Ionian and Pythagorean philosophers, Eleatic and atomistic philosophers, and sophistic philosophers, and Socrates.

Block VI presents the philosophical positions, perspectives and ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Hellenism and Neo-Platonism.

Diacritical Marks

A diacritical mark is a symbol that tells us how to pronounce a word. Generally whenever we write a word from a language in roman script we use diacritical marks to covey the exact pronunciation. In line with this academic practice this study material also makes use of diacritical marks wherever words from Sanskrit language are mentioned.

Vowels

Devanāgarī	**Transcription**		**Category**
अ	A	A	monophthongs and syllabic liquids
आ	ā/â	Ā/Â	
इ	I	I	
ई	ī/î	Ī/Î	
उ	U	U	
ऊ	ū/û	Ū/Û	
ऋ	ṛ	Ṛ	
ॠ	ṝ	Ṝ	
ऌ	ḷ	Ḷ	
ॡ	ḹ	Ḹ	

ए	E	E	diphthongs
ऐ	Ai	Ai	
ओ	O	O	
औ	Au	Au	
◌ं	ṁ/ṅ	Ṁ/Ṅ	anusvara
◌ः	ḥ	Ḥ	visarga
◌ँ	~		chandrabindu
ऽ	'		avagraha

Consonants

velars	palatals	retroflexes	dentals	labials	Category
क k K	च c C	ट ṭ Ṭ	त t T	प p P	tenuis stops
ख kh Kh	छ ch Ch	ठ ṭh Ṭh	थ th Th	फ ph Ph	aspirated stops
ग g G	ज j J	ड ḍ Ḍ	द d D	ब b B	voiced stops

घ gh Gh	झ jh Jh	ढ ḍh Ḍh	ध dh Dh	भ bh Bh	breathy-voiced stops
ङ ṅ Ṅ	ञ ñ Ñ	ण ṇ Ṇ	न n N	म m M	nasal stops
ह h H	य y Y	र r R	ल l L	व v V	approximants
	श ś Ś	ष ṣ Ṣ	स s S		sibilants
	क्ष Kṣ	त्र Tr	ज्ञ Jñ		

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Block I

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Block Introduction

Block I attempts to outline general characterstics of Philosophy by introducing Indian and Western Philosophical Traditions.

Unit 1 'Introduction to Philosophy' provides a general introduction of philosophy and tries to explore tha nature of philosophy with the help of some examples. This unit also presents the philosophical questions of Metaphysics, Epistemology, Axiology etc. and their interrelation.

Unit 2 'Indian Philosophy: Characteristics, Perspectices and Issues', of this block attempts to explain, with the help of central characterstics of Indian Philosophy, is there any fundamental difference between Indian and Western traditions, if yes, then what are those differences, along with this, it also addresses the questions of what is philosophy, what is ultimate reality? Etc. It also discusses some fundamental Indian thesis like Puruṣārthas, Varṇāśrama etc.

Unit 3 'Western Philosophy: Characteristics, Perspectices and Issues' outlines the Western Philosophies from a chronological point of view, namely, ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary western philosophies. These overviews reveal that all questions about reality are also questions about ourselves and the way we interpret our knowledge about reality. They bear testimony to the fact that the questioning capacity and nature of humans – under the basic thrust of skepticism, idealism, rationalism and positivism – are also existential questions.

The above given 3 units will give you basic understanding of philosophy required to grasp the profound reflections of great philosophers and their systems. In addition, this block will introduce you to the art of philosophizing.

Unit 1 Introduction to Philosophy*

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Understanding What Philosophy Is: Questions, Confusions, Wonder, Dogma

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are

- To provide a general introduction and to orient the learner towards the discipline of Philosophy.
- Helping the learner engage with philosophical thinking as a means of understanding what philosophy is.
- Introducing the learner to philosophical questions of Metaphysics, Epistemology, Axiology etc. and their interrelation.
- Briefly acquainting the learner with some philosophical problems.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

What is Philosophy? What makes Philosophy and Philosophical thinking a discipline distinct from mathematics, science, history, psychology, linguistics, etc.?

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Arthur C. Danto had famously noted that the attempts at understanding the "Nature of Philosophy" and the attempts of answering the question "What is Philosophy?" are themselves *philosophical*. Suggesting further that the quest for knowing what philosophy is, and the methods one employs to find a coherent and satisfactory answer to that question, is itself a philosophical one from the very outset. What makes this observation even more interesting is it's disanalogy with asking and answering similar questions about other specialized disciplines such as "what is mathematics" or "what is science" or "what is history", which can hardly be identified as being mathematical, scientific, or historical, respectively. There is therefore something distinctly philosophical about trying to understand philosophy itself.

Yet answering this question is no simple task. The subject-matter, nature, content, and methodology of Philosophy have often been regarded as being extremely hard to capture in a simple concise definition. One reason for this difficulty could be the inherent tendency of philosophy to be interested in, and interact with, the concepts, subject matter and methods which otherwise tend to carve the structure and foundations of other specialized disciplines.

Gilber Ryle (1945-1946) drew a distinction between two kinds of knowing—the "knowing how" and the "knowing that". The nature of Philosophy can be understood and known in either and/or both of these ways. Following this Rylean distinction one may make an attempt at understanding Philosophy by having recourse to the multifarious definitions and descriptions through which it has been explained by thinkers and philosophers; and/or one may try understanding the nature of philosophy by engaging with philosophising ourselves, i.e., by actually doing philosophy.

This introductory unit aims at equipping the learners with a working understanding of what philosophy is. In this attempt the unit will take the learner through a discussion of some popular descriptions about the nature of philosophy. Even though the selected descriptions may not be entirely sufficient in explaining to us the true and distinct nature of philosophy, yet they present themselves as necessary and significant starting points in our current endeavour. These discussions would simultaneously raise and consider questions which will help the learner understand the nature of philosophical thinking by means of directly engaging with some prominent philosophical problems and thinking through them.

1.2 UNDERSTANDING WHAT PHILOSOPHY IS: QUESTIONS, CONFUSIONS, WONDER, AND DOGMA

If we look up the dictionaries and the several internet resources available to us, we would find that the word "Philosophy" usually gets described as a specialized discipline which studies basic, fundamental, and general questions concerning the ideas and concepts such as existence, knowledge, values, reason, etc.

Let us begin by focussing on the terms "general", "fundamental", "questions". Since philosophy is being described as the study of these general and fundamental questions, it would indeed be worthwhile to first of all understand what they signify.

Every discipline and every specialized area of inquiry usually begins with certain intellectual presuppositions, which often appear in the form of certain concepts and ideas that constitute the very foundation and framework of the discipline concerned. Since these concepts are so fundamental, they tend to remain as unquestioned starting points onto which the superstructure of that discipline rests. This "underpinning intellectual framework", comprised of "fundamental concepts", is such that from within the discipline its sense and significance is taken as granted (Prichard 2016, xiii). Questioning and engaging with these conceptual foundations may be described as a defining characteristic of philosophical inquiries in general.

Let us think about mathematics for instance. One critical concept that mathematics rely upon is that of "numbers". Yet inquiring about the nature and status of numbers themselves, and asking questions like "what are numbers?", or for that matter even "what is mathematics?", no longer remain the subject of mathematics itself. Any attempt at coherently answering these questions can hardly ever be deemed as a "mathematical inquiry". Raising such foundational questions as— are numbers real or tangible entities like trees, chairs and tables? If they are "real" then why don't we have sensory access to them like other real objects? Or are numbers imaginary like unicorns and mythological characters? But if they are imaginary, then how is it that most humans are able to conceptualize and use them in a strikingly similar manner, irrespective of cultural social, geographical, distinctions; etc.— are instead constitutive of a proper philosophical investigation. Similar observations can be made about the sciences too, which tend to take as foundational the conceptions of Spatiality, Temporality, Causation, the Physical nature of Reality, etc. among others. If the scientists were to entertain the possibility

of the world being imaginary, or even non-physical, then they would hardly be able to discover or make any *certain* claims about the nature of reality on the basis of physical laws and principles. Furthermore, if they were to start questioning the very idea of causation, on the basis of which reliable predictions are made regarding underlying causes and possible effects, then they would hardly be engaging in science; rather they would be venturing into philosophical investigations. Engaging with general and fundamental questions like— "what is reality?", "what is causation?", "what is time?", "what is physicality?", etc. are not scientific quests per say; they become matters of philosophical theorization. Likewise, we would observe that if a psychologist begins to investigate questions such as What is Mind? Or What is Emotion?; or a Linguist asks "What is Meaning" or "what is Language" ; or for that matter a Sociologist asks "What is Society" and a Political Theorist asks "What is Justice" or "what is freedom", then their investigations would hardly qualify as psychology, linguistics, sociology, or political science respectively; instead these foundational investigations would traverse into the more generalized domain of philosophizing. This also provides an explanation of why a deeper more foundational study of any discipline is called a "Ph. D." or a "Doctor of Philosophy".

When Arthur Danto (1968) noted "what is philosophy? as a philosophical question", he was aiming to emphasize a crucial aspect of philosophy and philosophizing which helps us distinguish it from other disciplines. He was comparing foundational investigations like "what is science", which is clearly not a scientific quest, or "what is mathematics", which is likewise not a mathematical inquiry, with "What is Philosophy?" which is a philosophical question, as in raising and addressing it we do not end up transcending disciplinary boundaries. Rather in asking and addressing "what is philosophy" we are trying to uncover and understand the theoretical and conceptual presuppositions of philosophizing itself, and that exercise falls within the purview of philosophical thinking, as it is nothing but a bona-fide philosophical query.

So, what is philosophy after all? Plato answered this question by observing that "Philosophy begins in Wonder". But this assertion does not explain much till we try to understand and investigate what wonder itself is, and also when is it that we 'wonder about' or 'wonder at' something? Do we wonder about everything? Are we really curious about everything? The obvious answer would be 'no'. Since we do not wonder at everything, then the question is what determines when our curiosity gets ignited and engages us in wonder? We find ourselves being perplexed about things and events which are either unexpected, or novel, or

unfamiliar. Imagine that you are out on an excursion trip in a dense forest, and you end up being left behind by your fellow travellers who have gone ahead with the guide. You start following the trodden path in an attempt to catch up with the group. You are unfazed as you march alone, since there is just one pathway leading ahead. But now out of a sudden you approach a point where the pathway diverges into two directions. It is now that you are perplexed. Till there was a singular path you were hardly *thinking* about which way to go (Dewey 1910). But the moment another alternative appeared, you found yourself compelled to think, reflect, wonder, and decide which way to choose and why. Similar is the case with thinking and wondering in general. We all know "2+2=4". Since we are sure that there is no other alternative answer, we hardly ever find ourselves mulling over or wondering about this formula. But if someone were to propose to you that "2+2" can also be equal to 5, suddenly your mind would be perplexed as this novel possibility and begin wondering. You would be curious to know, why and under what circumstances can 2 and 2 add up to 5 and not 4. So, we find that the availability of alternatives and possibilities (which may be novel, or even yet un-discovered) is what provokes a sense of wonder, demand us to think, reflect, philosophise and make sense of the yet un-explained.

Similarly, one would observe that the endeavour of thinking through foundational concepts and ideas reveals that there are numerous theories and numerous perspectives (more often dissimilar and only sometimes alike in certain respects) that can be adopted with regard to the exact sense and significance of the concepts under question. There is an obvious lack of clarity or certainty; instead, what one lands up with is, opacity, ambiguity, and a lot of disagreement. So, each time we raise and try to address a fundamental question, one confronts alternatives and possibilities leading to "conceptual confusions". And when one gradually starts engaging with the available/plausible alternative interpretations; with the aim of gaining clarity, coherence, and consistency in our thoughts, ideas and understanding; one finds oneself engaging in philosophizing.

This brings us to another way of characterizing the Nature of Philosophy. Dayakrishna, a contemporary Indian Philosopher in his *"Nature of Philosophy"*(2009), opined that Philosophy is a "cognitive activity *par excellence*" whose subject matter is constituted distinctly by "concepts", such that a philosophical engagement is one where the mind not only engages with "conceptual clarifications" but also with the problems and "conceptual confusions" that propel the need for such clarifications. He writes "Philosophy has been the comprehensive name both for the [conceptual] confusion and their clarification" (2009, 319)

Concepts are the most fundamental currency of thought, and philosophical thinking tends to oscillate between "conceptual confusions" and "conceptual clarifications".

The above discussion further highlights how questions reveal and make us realize the nature and extent of these conceptual confusions. Raising questions, tackling the evident ambiguity, confusion and apparent contradiction is definitely unsettling, for the moment a question is raised an alternative opens up a possibility of things views states of affairs being other than what we had earlier presumed them to be. The moment we start to "think through" a concept or an idea, in order to gain clarity, coherence and consistency we end up doing philosophy. Philosophical thinking therefore, can also be said to begin with the motivation of removing opacity and gaining clarity.

Summarily, the above discussions characterize Philosophy as *a cognitive activity of thinking through things thoroughly and rigorously*. It thrives on questioning aimed at gaining conceptual clarifications. The tools that philosophy utilizes to accomplish this task thorough thinking are Reasoning, Argumentation, Explanation and most importantly Logic, which aids us with ways and means of engaging in correct reasoning thereby also distinguishing correct from in-correct reasoning. Philosophy is triggered and propelled by a deep sense of wonder, curiosity, and the desire to know. This desire should, however, not to be conflated with the otherwise more common instinct of gathering information. Rather it needs to be understood as a more nuanced urge of arriving at answers which give clarity, coherence, and certainty to our thoughts, concepts, and ideas. As learners and practitioners of philosophy, we would tend to develop a kind of "filter" whereby everything we engage with, would be subjected to a thorough questioning-thinking-reflecting process before being admitted/accepted/imbibed.

Finally, the critical and questioning spirit inherent in philosophy is what also makes it Anti-Dogmatic. Dogmatism is defined as "the tendency to characterize assertions as undeniably true". Dogmatism, appears wherever and whenever one is told "what is the case" without allowing for the scope or the possibility of any further probing with questions like "why", "how", "what", "Why-not", if-but", etc. Everywhere criticism, questioning, argumentation gets discouraged or disallowed, one can be sure that one is dealing with a dogma. Completely opposed to dogmatism is philosophizing which thrives upon and inculcates a questioning, reflective, and critical approach. It enables individuals to develop as free, curious, and engaged thinkers. Philosophy is a matter of lots of "if's", but's, maybe's and because. So, it is

not just about claims stating "what is the case" but also the adjoining explanations, reasoning, and supporting arguments regarding why that assertion is plausible.

Know Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Why did Danto say "What is philosophy?" is itself a philosophical question?

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1.3 Understanding What Philosophy Does: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Axiology

A Philosophical Inquiry can be directed onto a variety of subject matter. In fact, there are numerous specialized sub-fields that philosophers engage with—philosophy of science, Philosophy of biology, Philosophy of Law, Philosophy of language, Philosophy of mathematics, Political Philosophy, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of history, Philosophy of love, Philosophy of culture, Philosophy of morality, Philosophy of human person, Philosophy of religion, etc. Apart from these, the philosophical developments appearing in certain geographical regions, and in certain historical periods, have also been identified and studied as specialized fields of inquiry, for instance Classical/ Contemporary Indian Philosophy; Ancient Philosophy, Greek Philosophy, Continental Philosophy; Ancient/ Modern/ Contemporary Western Philosophy; Chinese Philosophy, etc.

Together with these, most philosophical enquiries usually get classified either as being "metaphysical" or "epistemological" or "axiological" in nature.

Metaphysics encompasses investigations concerning the nature of Reality, including (but not being limited to) questions like "what is reality", "What is the common characteristic or essence of everything we call Real?"; "What is the ultimate nature of reality?"; "Is reality ultimately material or is it non-material and spiritual in its essence?"; "What are the kinds of

things that can be called real and why?"; "What is the status of God, Soul, Consciousness, etc.? are they as real as the pen and paper in our hands, if yes then how, and if not then why?"; "what criteria(s)/standard(s)/characteristic(s) allow us to draw a distinction being Real and Unreal?"; "What is the difference between that which is Real and that which is Existent?"; "Can something which does not exist still be Real?"; etc.

Epistemology, concerns itself with investigations regarding the nature of knowledge, including the means, the origin, the validity of the same. Some significant epistemological concerns include "what is knowledge?"; "How can we distinguish certain knowledge from erroneous knowledge?"; "How do we know what we know?"; "What are the tools / means that we deploy in gaining knowledge?"; "What are the limits of knowledge? Can we know everything?"; "Are there things that are forever beyond our grasp and comprehension?"; "What is the difference between perceiving something, believing something, understanding something, and knowing something?"; etc.

Axiology refers to investigations concerning the nature of values. Valuational judgments regarding "Truth" and "Falsity" fall under the domain of Logic; those regarding "Morality", "Immorality", "moral rightness", "goodness" etc. fall within the domain of Ethics; and those regarding the value of Beauty come under Aesthetics. Axiology concerns itself with questions like: What is the metaphysical status of these values? i.e., are they real are they unreal? Are these values same for everyone or do they differ across people and groups? i.e., are they subjective, objective, or intersubjective?; Are these values learned, can they be taught or are they instinctively present?; etc.

Most of the discussions in philosophy tend to get classified as one or the other of these abovementioned inquiries. Most of the themes that the learners would be familiarized with in the upcoming units of this course would deal with problems associated with these themes directly or indirectly. Yet, as far as these three categories of philosophical queries and investigations are concerned, there are certain clarifications that need to be kept in mind. Like most classifications the boundaries of these categories; i.e., metaphysics, epistemology, axiology; are not watertight, rather they are blurry, and even porous. It is not the case that a metaphysical inquiry is completely disconnected from epistemological concerns or vice-versa; or that an inquiry in ethics is isolated from metaphysics and epistemology. Neither of these categories should be taken to signify rigid distinctions, because at a deeper level of analysis they are essentially interdependent, and intertwined through shared concerns. This

may be demonstrated as follows. Every inquiry presumes a sort of a relation between the subject, the knower, the inquirer; and the object which the knower is trying to inquire about. And in so far as it is relational every inquiry depends as much upon the nature of the knower as it depends upon and reveals the nature of the subject matter. In so far as this is the case, every inquiry ends up being a concern which is at the same time metaphysical (since it needs to decipher the nature of the object under scrutiny) and epistemological (since it needs to decipher the nature of the knower and the knowing process). For instance, enhancing or changing our visual apparatus reveals a completely different reality to us, be it with the use of the microscope or the telescope, or even spectacles. Had these instruments not enhanced to our epistemic apparatus, our understanding of reality and its constitutions would have been very different. Any change in either of the constitutive elements has a direct impact on the nature of the inquiry and the findings that result from it.

Know Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is Epistemology?

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1.4 Doing Philosophy: Doubting the Indubitable, Transcending the limits of knowledge

Philosophical problems and inquiries often begin with simple questions and doubts— Is there anything that we can know with absolute certainty? Is there anything which cannot be doubted? Can the really real even be known? Is reality exactly how things appear to us? Can reality be known by us? If there is really a God, then why is there suffering in the world? Getting an overview of what doing philosophy involves, and amounts to, can be

demonstrated by showing how a simple query can open up other correlated issues which at times do not cohere, create confusions and therefore, demand further clarifications.

1.4.1 Doubting the Indubitable

All academic disciplines, be it the sciences or the arts, tend to be propelled by the impetus of seeking clarity and certainty in our understanding, whether it is about the nature of the world we inhabit, or about the nature of our own selves. But is there anything which cannot be doubted and negated, about which we can be absolutely certain. Is there anything which is indubitably true? *Adi Sankaracarya*, the propounder of *Advaita Vedanta*, observed that irrespective of the experiences one has—be it wakefulness, dream, or deep sleep— the realization of one's own existence is something which remains non-sublatable and undeniable. Mulling over similar queries, Rene Descartes in his "*Meditations*" (1978) stumbled upon the observation that even though we may raise cogent doubts about everything, yet in the whole process of doubting and thinking, something which presents itself as an indubitable fact is the very existence of the doubter or the doubting self. The fact that I am thinking and or raising a doubt, by implication, proves my own existence. And moment the existence of the knowing self is proved, the existence of many other things can also be "commonsensically" proved. G. E. Moore, in his "*Defence of Common Sense*" (1925) showed how if we believe that we exist and if we believe in evolution and reproduction, then by implication we can prove the existence of the external world and the existence of other persons and other minds.

But the question still remains as to whether my existence is as simple and certain a fact as *Shankaracarya* and Descartes thought it to be, is it really impossible to doubt our very existence? Whatever we know of ourselves has to do with the memories we have of our past and current experiences. What if we are nothing more than an artificial brain kept in a vat (Putnam, 1999) connected with a computer program which artificially feeds us experiences and memories. Since we have to ultimately rely on our experiences and memories to be sure of our existence, and since these memories and experiences may be artificially fed to us, then it may be validly asked –how, if at all, can we ever be certain of whether we are real persons with flesh and blood or merely computer programs fed with experiences and memories of a person with flesh and blood. It is hard to tell. Perhaps everything can in fact be reasonably doubted; perhaps we cannot be certain even of our own existences either.

1.4.2 Transcending the Limits of Knowledge

Another interesting philosophical problem concerns the limits of knowledge. Imagine being born with an innate pair of blue spectacles, which you are neither aware of, nor can get rid of. Everything you ever saw and experienced was always seen through those spectacles. Because everything you could ever see was always viewed through the glasses you would naturally have the impression that the world is *really* as it appears to you. But one fine day a doctor told you that all this while you had been seeing the world through these blue glasses you were born with. Now since you cannot take off the glasses either, you continue to experience the world as you always did, the only difference being that you now begin to wonder and think—"what is the world really like"? Your awareness of the fact that your experience is being mediated by something is enough to compel you to wonder what the "reality" really looks like. Is it by coincidence "blue" too? Is it something other than being hued blue? These are questions that may validly asked by you, but can you ever transcend your "epistemic limitations" to know the really real beyond how it appears? All that can be said with some degree of certainty is that what I am able to experience is conditioned on my epistemological framework; whether it is an exact representation of the real world, or a completely morphed version of it, is something that will always be beyond the limits of one's knowledge.

Know Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. 'Philosophy is a cognitive activity of thinking through things thoroughly and rigorously'. Discuss.

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

The present unit was an attempt at giving a broad Introduction of Philosophy and Philosophising. It began by engaging the learner in discussions surrounding the nature of philosophy, which gets characterized in terms of wonderment, conceptual confusions and clarifications, reflection and a questioning spirit which makes it un-dogmatic. Further the learner was introduced with some key philosophical questions which get classified as Metaphysics, Epistemology and Axiology. And finally, the learner was engaged in discussions surrounding some key philosophical problems, making them understand the nature of philosophy by means of philosophising.

1.6 KEY WORDS

Metaphysics: Theory of Reality

Epistemology: Theory of Knowledge

Axiology: Theory of Values

Ethics: Moral Philosophy

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. When Arthur Danto noted "what is philosophy? as a philosophical question", he was aiming to emphasize a crucial aspect of philosophy and philosophizing which helps us distinguish it from other disciplines. He was comparing foundational investigations like "what is science", which is clearly not a scientific quest, or "what is mathematics", which is likewise nor a mathematical inquiry, with "What is Philosophy?" which is a philosophical question, as in raising and addressing it we do not end up transcending disciplinary boundaries. Rather in asking and addressing "what is philosophy" we are trying to uncover and understand the theoretical and conceptual presuppositions of philosophizing itself, and that exercise falls within the purview of philosophical thinking, as it is nothing but a bona-fide philosophical query.

Check Your Progress II

1. Epistemology concerns itself with investigations regarding the nature of knowledge, including the means, the origin and the validity of the same. Some significant epistemological concerns include "what is knowledge?"; "How can we distinguish certain knowledge from erroneous knowledge?"; "How do we know what we know?"; "What are the tools / means that we deploy in gaining knowledge?"; "What are the limits of knowledge? Can we know everything?"; "Are there things that are forever beyond our grasp and comprehension?"; "What is the difference between perceiving something, believing something, understanding something, and knowing something?" etc.

Check Your Progress III

1. Philosophy is a cognitive exercise which like any other specialized academic discipline aims at gaining clarity, certainty, and comprehensiveness in out thoughts, concepts and ideas. It is anti-dogmatic as it thrives on raising questions and thinking through conceptual presumptions. There is moreover no limit with regard to what one can philosophically engage with be it the notion of Art, or Science, or Time, or God, philosophy has an extensive purview which includes itself. Every time we think through a concept to remove ambiguity and gain clarity, we are philosophising.

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UNIT 2 INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: CHARACTERISTICS, PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES*

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Philosopher's Look at Reality

2.3 Knowledge in Indian Context

2.4 Philosophy and Life

2.5 Let Us Sum Up

2.6 Key Words

2.7 Suggested Readings and References

2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are:

- To dispel certain misconceptions about Indian philosophy held mainly by western scholars and certain other misconceptions held by some Indian scholars. In order to grasp Indian philosophy in proper perspective, it is necessary that these misconceptions are erased;
- To distinguish philosophy from religion in the Indian context. This unit shows that, taken in the strict sense of the term, philosophy is not the same as religion. Some key philosophical issues developed in the Indian context are on very different lines as compared to western thought;

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- To project the essence of Indian thought.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the Indian context, philosophy is taken to mean Darśana or *tattva*. Let's see how the etymological meaning of 'philosophy' correlates itself with Darśana or *tattva*. '*Dṛśyate anena iti darśanam*' translates as 'the one through which it is seen'. From a philosophical point of view, to 'see' means to 'realise'. *Darśana,* therefore, means to realise. Further, the verb "realise" is a transitive verb. Whenever we realise, we always realise 'something'. To say that we realise 'nothing' is to admit that there is no realisation at all. If we recollect whatever that was said about 'know', then it becomes clear that to a great extent 'to realise' corresponds to 'to know', and hence realisation corresponds to knowledge. This correspondence is nearly one-to-one; i.e., it is nearly isomorphic. This aspect shall unfold itself in due course.

Simultaneously, the word *tattva* is derived from two words '*tat*' and '*tva*'. *Tat* means 'it' or 'that' and *tva* means 'you'. Therefore *tattva,* etymologically, means 'you are that'. What is important is to know what *tat* stands for in Indian thought. It means reality or 'ultimate' reality. This is also what one division of philosophy, i.e., metaphysics talks about. Now, since Darśana *is* about knowing reality, it involves not only an important metaphysical component but also an important epistemological component. Hence, the summation of these two components more or less satisfactorily completes the description of philosophy as Darśana in Indian context.

There is yet another component that remains to be understood. Obviously, 'you' (*tva*) stands for knower, i.e., the epistemological subject and by identifying the epistemological subject with reality, we arrive at an important corollary. Indian thought did not distinguish between reality and the person or epistemological subject and hence etymologically, knowledge in Indian thought became inward (however, it must be emphasized that it outgrew the etymological meaning in its nascent stage itself). But what is of critical importance is the philosophical significance of the above mentioned corollary. Wherever man is involved, directly or indirectly, value is involved, hence axiology surfaces. When man is identified with reality, it and the whole lot of issues related to reality gain value-overtones. Hence, in Indian context, value is not merely a subject matter of philosophy, but philosophy itself comes to be regarded as 'value'. Consequently, the very approach of Indian thinkers to philosophy gains some distinct features.

2.2 PHILOSOPHER'S LOOK AT REALITY

Indian thought is essentially pluralistic as we understand through the exposition of reality. First, we can begin with types of reality and this can be done from two different angles.

Table 1:

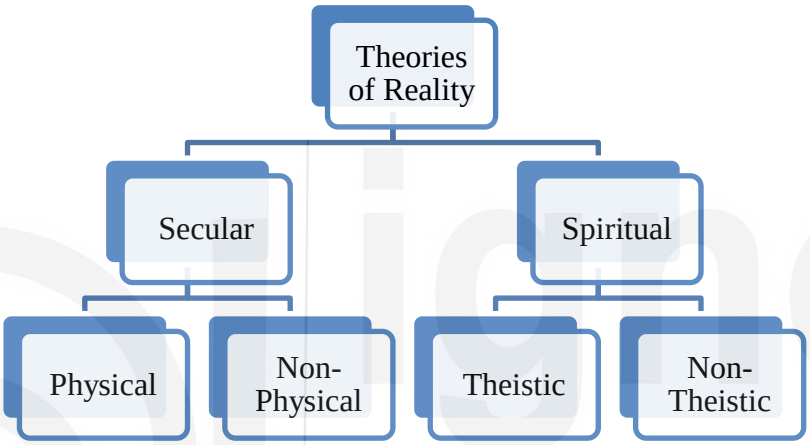
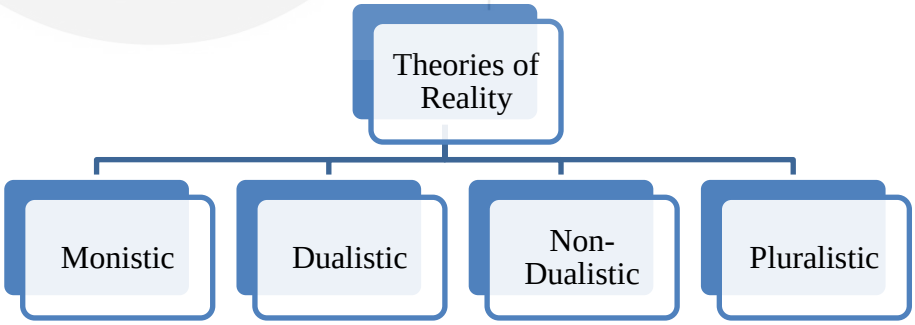


Table: 2



Let us try to understand what Table 1 says. But before doing so, it is better to answer the question; what is reality? Indeed, this is the most difficult question to answer. To start with: 'reality' can be defined as the one which is the ultimate source of everything and itself does not have any source. It also can be taken to mean that which is independent. This definition itself is

hotly debated in philosophical circles. If we take this as a working definition of reality, then we find it to our surprise that ancient Indians offered various answers resulting in "proliferation of an ocean of theories", to use Feyerabend's phrase. Contrary to widespread belief that prevailed in the past, all Indian thinkers did not recognize reality as spiritual. Nor did they unanimously regard it as secular. A complex discipline like philosophy does not allow for such simple divisions. Surely, some thinkers accepted only spiritual reality and on the contrary, some other thinkers accepted only 'secular' reality. However, an upshot of this division was that thinkers in India neglected neither this world nor the 'other' (if it exists), and this is a significant aspect to be borne in mind.

Curiously, at Level 2, the divisions of secular and spiritual theories are mutually exclusive and totally exhaustive, i.e., physical and non-physical, on the one hand and theistic and non-theistic, on the other. Though within secular range (and similarly within spiritual range) the divisions exclude each other any division of secular theory can go with any division of spiritual theory without succumbing to self-contradiction. Accordingly, we arrive at four combinations which are as follows:

1. Physical – Theistic

2. Physical – Non-Theistic

3. Non-Physical – Theistic

4. Non-Physical – Non-Theistic

Now let us delve into the meaning of these terms. A theory which regards the independence of the physical world is physical. Likewise, a theory which regards the independence of any other substance than the physical world is non-physical. The former need not be non-theistic. A theory of reality can accord equal status to this world and god. Surely, it does not involve any self-contradiction. The *Dvaita* and the Vaiśeṣika illustrate the former, whereas *Cārvāka* (Physical-Non theistic) illustrates the latter. A diagram illustrates the point.

Physical Theistic

(A) (C)

Non- Physical

Non-theistic

(B)

(D)

What is to be noted here is that A and B lack connectivity; and so also C and D. In western tradition, the term 'mind' replaces the term non-physical. However, in Indian context such usage is inaccurate because, at least, some schools regard mind as a sixth organ. The Sāṅkhya is one school which regards the mind as an evolute of *prakriti* (creation). Hence, it is as much physical as any other sense organ. The Vaiśeṣika is another school which has to be bracketed with the Sāṅkhya in this regard. At this stage, we should get ourselves introduced to two key metaphysical terms, realism and idealism; the former with all its variants regards the external world as ultimately real, whereas the latter with all its variants regards external world as a derivative of mind. Of course, here mind is not to be construed as a sixth organ. The Yogācāra, a later Buddhistic school is one system which subscribes to idealism.

Now it is clear that (A) and (B) are mutually exclusive and totally exhaustive. Under D (Non-theistic) there are two sub-divisions; atheistic and agnostic. C (Theistic) on the one hand, and atheistic and agnostic on the other hand are mutually exclusive and totally exhaustive. Since, atheistic and agnostic doctrines are philosophically different, 2nd and 4th types are further split into two each. So, instead of 4, we will have six theories. Each theory differs from every other theory. The differences are, sometimes gross and sometimes subtle. It is, now, more than obvious that Indian philosophy does not lend itself to simple and easy categorization. Complexity and variety must be regarded as salient features of Indian thought. This aspect is further compounded when table 1 and table 2 intersect. Before considering such an intersection we should first elucidate table 2.

Table 2 explicates theories of reality and distinguishes theories on the basis of number, i.e., the number of substances, which are regarded as real, becomes the criterion to make any distinction. Monism asserts that reality is one. The assertions of dualistic and pluralistic theories can be ascertained without difficulty, since they stand for 'two' and 'more than two' respectively. Non-

dualistic theory, i.e., The *Advaita* is unique. It does not make any assertion about numbers, but only negates dualism (if dualism is inadmissible, then pluralism is also inadmissible). The *Upaniṣads* are monistic and The Vaiśeṣika is pluralistic.

Now we shall integrate table 1 and table 2. An integration of this sort yields in all twenty four systems. This is not to imply that twenty-four systems dominated the scene. But the majority of them did flourish at one time or another. Consideration of questions in respect of reality should make it clear that no qualitative difference can be discerned between the Indian and the western traditions. Questions are alike; because problems are alike. But the same set of questions may elicit different answers from different minds at different times and places. Always, *spatio-temporal* factor play a major role in determining solutions. The last aspect becomes clear after we consider issues in respect of knowledge.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is the meaning of the term 'Darśana'?

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2. Define Darśana in Indian Philosophical Context.

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2.3 KNOWLEDGE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Desire is not an extraordinary quality of man. This is an instinct which can be discerned in any animal. However, human beings have a very powerful desire to know. The extent of knowledge acquired or capable of being acquired varies from species to species. This is one difference. Second, human's motive to acquire knowledge and their concept of knowledge differ from

culture to culture, thus the concept of knowledge is relative to culture. The essence of philosophy consists in these two principal factors; motive and idea.

Indian and western concepts, whether ancient or modern, are best understood when they are compared and contrasted. Ancient Greeks believed in the principle 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge', which gave impetus to birth and growth of pure science. In contrast, the post-renaissance age heralded the contrary principle 'knowledge is power'. This dictum propagated by Bacon changed forever the very direction of the evolution of science. However, ancient Indians exhibited a very different mindset. While medicine and surgery developed to meet practical needs, astronomy and mathematics developed for unique reasons, neither purely spiritual nor purely mundane, in order to perform *yajñas* to meet practical ends and *yajñas* to achieve spiritual gain. At any rate, ancient Indians never believed in the Greek dictum. Nor did they, perhaps, think of it. If we regard knowledge as value, then we have to conclude that it was never regarded as intrinsic. On the other hand, it was mainly instrumental. The only exception to this characterization is the Cārvāka system which can be regarded as the Indian counterpart of Epicureanism.

In a restricted sense, the Indian philosophy of knowledge comes very close to the Baconian philosophy of knowledge. Truly, Indians regarded knowledge as power because for them knowledge (and thereby, philosophy) was a way of life and was never intrinsic. But, then, it is absolutely necessary to reverse the connotation of the word 'power'. While the Baconian 'power' was meant to experience control over nature, the Indian 'power' was supposed to be the instrument to subjugate one's own self to nature. This is the prime principle which forms the cornerstone of early *Vedic* thought. This radical change in the meaning of the word 'power' also explains the difference in world view which can be easily discerned when the belief-systems and attitudes of Indians and Europeans (for our purpose 'west' means Europe only) are compared and contrasted. Post-Baconian Europe believed that this universe and everything in it is meant to serve the purpose of man because man is the centre of the universe. (The spark of this thought did characterize a certain phase in the development of *Vedic* thought, only to be denounced at later stages). On the other hand, ancient Indian philosophers believed in identifying themselves with nature. For the western thinkers, knowledge was not only 'power' but became a powerful weapon to address their economic and political agenda. At no point in time did they look upon knowledge as a means to achieve anything even remotely connected to a spiritual goal. Just as the Cārvāka is an exception in Indian context, Socrates and Spinoza can be regarded as

exceptions in western context. Most Indian philosophers did not regard worldly pleasure as ultimate. For them there was something more important and enduring and therefore the conquest of nature was never a goal. Precisely, this attitude has generated a lot of needless controversy. This characterization, which, no doubt, is true, was grossly misunderstood and, consequently, it was argued that the Indian thought rejects altogether this world and presents life as totally irrelevant and insignificant. This argument, which stems from total misunderstanding, is altogether unwarranted. To say that x is more important than y is not to say that y is insignificant. If something is more important, then it means that something else is 'less' important. In other words, Indian tradition, surely, includes the 'present' life, but it is not restricted to it only rather goes beyond it.

Evidently, Indian tradition maintains a certain hierarchy of values. Knowledge, as a way of life, encompasses not only all sorts of values but also it changes one's own perspective. Accordingly, the so-called spiritual goal in life can be attained only by one who has acquired knowledge of the truth. It points to the fact that ignorance or *Avidyā* is a hindrance to attain spiritual goals in particular and any other goal in general. One who has acquired true knowledge or knows truly, acts and thinks, very differently, different from ignorant, a characteristic Socratic thought in Indian attire. However, this characteristic is conspicuous by its absence in western tradition. In this context, while Socrates and Spinoza are at one end of the thread, Bacon and Heidegger are at the opposite end. The point is that in Indian tradition, philosophy and value are inse*Parā*ble, whereas in the west it is not necessarily so.

This sort of emphasis upon values led to a hermeneutic blunder. Consequently, many western thinkers argued that Indian philosophy was never distinct from religion. Hence, according to critics, in India there was no philosophy at all worth the name, that there was no religion in India (with the exclusion of tribal religion). However, the so-called *Hindu dharma* cannot be mistaken and ought not to be mistaken for religion. This confusion arose because many scholars mistakenly identified religion with spirituality. An analogy may clear the mist surrounding Indian philosophy. Western philosophy is not divided into Christian philosophy and Jewish philosophy, though all western philosophers (excluding Greek philosophers) in loose sense are either Christians or Jews. Likewise, it is highly inappropriate to talk about '*Hindu philosophy'*, though majority of Indian philosophers were *Hindus*. It is true that a few philosophers in India became the heads of religious groups or sects (eg. Rāmānuja or Madhva*).* But then there are medieval philosophers like St. Augustine, St. Aquinas, etc. in the west also. But surely, we have

Buddhist or Jaina philosophy because neither Buddhism or Jainism is a religion in the strict sense of the term. At this point, a pertinent question arises, if there is Buddhist philosophy, then why not Hindu philosophy? To believe that there is such philosophy amounts to putting the cart in front of the horse. Philosophy in India did not originate from *Sanātana dharma* — or Hindu *dharma* as it is popularly known as — but it is rather the other way round.

Therefore, in sharp contrast to western tradition, Indian philosophy can be spiritually oriented. The concept of reality and aesthetic values also are endowed with spirituality. The *Upaniṣadic* or A*dvaitic* notion of *Brahman* is a classic example. It is spiritual because it is neither worldly (physical) nor religious. If knowledge is spiritual, then its *pramā* (object) also must be spiritual. '*Raso vai saḥ'* (that is, indeed, *rasa*) is an example for spiritual status of aesthetic value. In this case 'that' according to, at least one interpretation means '*Para Brahma'* or highest reality and Rasa may be taken to mean beauty. The metaphysical or spiritual element involved in philosophy must have been hijacked by religions to formulate their notions of gods (and perhaps to counter their rivals).

Let us return to knowledge again. Indian philosophy recognizes knowledge at two levels; *Parā Vidyā* (higher knowledge) and *Aparā Vidyā* (lower knowledge). Since knowledge is spiritual, only the former is true knowledge of reality, whereas the latter is slightly inferior, it refers to worldly knowledge. Though the *Upaniṣads* subscribe to this view, subsequent systems, (with the exception of Pūrva Mīmāṁsā) which are supposed to be commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, regarded perception, for example, as a means of knowledge. *Upamāna* (comparison) is another *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge). Not only lower knowledge, but also erroneous knowledge was seriously considered as species of knowledge (e.g., *akhyāti*) by systems of philosophy. Therefore even *Aparā Vidyā* retained its place. *Parā Vidyā* and *Aparā Vidyā* have their own place in the Indian thought, however they have been reconciled in Indian ethics in a remarkable manner. The concept of the *puruṣārtha* clarifies that only through *Dharma,* i.e., righteous means, man should acquire *artha* (wealth) and satisfy *kāma* (any sensuous desire), the very same means to attain *mokṣa* (liberation). The law of parsimony is very well adhered to in regard to the questions of social and moral philosophy in the Indian context.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. 'Knowledge is Power', analyse this dictum in Indian Philosophical Context.

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2. Write a note on the possibility of the applicability of the term "Hindu Philosophy'.

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2.4 PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE

We have seen that in Indian philosophy value and human life are inextricably blended. Now, the next pertinent question is: what is the aim of life according to Indian philosophers? To understand it simplistically, the aim of life according to the Indian tradition is to make a pilgrimage from 'misery to happiness'. This is a single thread which runs through the whole gamut of Indian philosophy. At one point of time, vertical split occurred in philosophical tradition leading to the birth of orthodox and heterodox schools of thought, yet, they concur on one issue, i.e., the aim of life. The dispute between these two poles did not prevent them from embracing a common goal. But in what sense is this goal a philosophical issue? This is one question which arises in this context: how can two opposing schools of thought have a common denominator? This is another.

Answers to the first question can be construed as follows. Knowledge as value is unique by itself. If the instrument which gives thrust to the quality of lifestyle has any economic value, then from a different perspective, if any, knowledge which reforms lifestyle also must possess value. Therefore knowledge became 'the' value in Indian thought. A *Jñāni* (knowledgeable person) in Socratic sense perceives not only routine life, but also the world in which he lives, differently because knowledge changes his world view. This type of change carries with it moral value. It means that the aim of life becomes an ethical issue. In this sense it becomes a philosophical issue.

Answer to the second question is still simpler. All schools of philosophy unanimously admit that the pursuit of happiness is the sole aim and unanimity stops there. But these two poles differ

when they specify what happiness is. An example may make the point clear. All political parties, in their election manifesto, proclaim that their sole aim is uplifting the downtrodden. But the mechanism of doing so differs from one party to the other. Now the position is clear. Orthodox and heterodox schools differ on what happiness is and on what constitute happiness. Even within the heterodox system the idea of happiness differs. The Cārvāka School maintains that happiness consists in pleasure whereas Buddhism asserts that happiness consists in *nirvāṇa* if happiness is to be construed as elimination of misery.

As we have mentioned that spirituality is the essence of Indian philosophy. Against this background, let us analyse what happiness is. Neither is the physical world nor is earthly pleasure permanent or ultimate. Hopefully, no one entertains the illusion that this world is eternal. However, not many care to think whether or not everlasting peace or happiness is possible within the bounds of a finite world. Indian philosophy is characterized by this thought. The desire to attain eternity is common to the Greek and the Indian traditions. However, in the latter case this desire takes a different form. Hence eternity is tantamount to permanent liberation from misery. A permanent liberation from misery is tantamount to attainment of permanent happiness and this it eternity. It is variously designated as *mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*, etc. In its ordinary sense *vairāgya* means renouncing happiness. But in real sense what has to be renounced is not happiness, but pleasure. *Vairāgya* in conjunction with knowledge leads to eternal happiness. Hence in Indian context *vairāgya* is 'renounce worldly pleasure and attain eternal happiness'. It is possible that the very idea of renunciation invites strong objections. But in one definite sense such a renunciation is desirable. *Vairāgya* should be construed as elimination of greed and inclusion of contentment in life. This is the hidden meaning of *vairāgya.* What happened, in course of time, was that both dimensions were wrongly interpreted leading to the conclusion that *vairāgya* is not only negative but also is the sign of pessimism. It did not stop at this stage, but extended to the whole of Indian philosophy.

Moreover, in the twentieth century, westerners believed that in India there was nothing like philosophy, but only myth and casuistry in the garb of philosophy. While the western scholars argued that in India, philosophy was totally corrupted by religion, some Indian scholars under the influence of Marxism failed to separate philosophy from custom and tradition. The merits and demerits of their arguments and counterarguments are not relevant presently. But the sense, in which the world religion has to be construed, if it has to be regarded as philosophically constructive, is important. If the word religion is taken to mean tribal religion, then its

association with philosophy spells doom to the latter. In India, philosophy was not influenced by religion in this sense. On the other hand, various religious sects, which grew later, were influenced by philosophy.

Now, let's take the criticisms of those scholars, who admit that in ancient India there was a philosophical movement, merit our considerations. According to one criticism, Indian thought prompted a negative outlook and therefore, is self-destructive because it negates the reality of the physical world. This criticism can be rebutted in two stages. In the first place, Indian philosophy does not deny the physical world in absolute terms. A particular system of philosophy does not become a negative doctrine just because it regards the world as impermanent and that what is impermanent is regarded as not ultimately real. No scientist has ever dared to say that the universe is eternal. If the critic's argument is admitted, then Plato's philosophy also becomes negative in character. Indian philosophers, like Plato, admitted something permanent. Impermanence and permanence are relative terms; relevance of any one of them demands the relevance of another. Secondly, what is relative is always relative to something different. There is nothing like absolute relativity. The last two statements which, actually, explicate the essence of the theory of relativity holds good here also.

Now let us consider the second stage of refutation. Is it legitimate to categorize any doctrine as negative? Refutation is an important step in arguments, but it is not final. If science can be characterized as 'satisfying a negative requirement such as falsifiability' (Karl Popper, 1959, p.41), then philosophy, whether Indian or western, also is entitled to the same benefit or status. To a great extent Indian philosophy followed the principle of 'Assertion through refutation'.

The second criticism is about the accusation that Indian philosophy is pessimistic. Any theory, which negates this world and life in absolute sense, ought to be pessimistic. The very fact that this criticism draws support from two sources of error shows the degree of misunderstanding. The desire to escape from misery was misconstrued as the desire to escape from the external world; it was ultimately a matter of discouraging merely earthly pleasure. Negation of earthly pleasure is not tantamount to the negation of happiness because pleasure and happiness are, evidently, different. *Mokṣa* is simply the Sanskrit version of happiness. Pleasure is not only momentary but also is not pure in the sense that pleasure always comes with pain. If we consider British philosopher Jeremy Bentham's criteria, then these criteria satisfy not pleasure but happiness. Duration, intensity and purity do not, in reality, characterize pleasure but happiness.

Perhaps proximity alone satisfies pleasure. If so, even from a practical standpoint any philosophy which regards *mokṣa* as ideal ceases to be pessimistic.

Desire to escape from this world perhaps appears to be escapist. However, in the Indian context, to move beyond this world is to liberate oneself from the cycle of birth and death and indulgence in the world. Yet, attainment of *mokṣa* is regarded as a possibility during the lifespan of an individual (this is what is called *jīvanmukti*), there is no reason to regard the external world as an evil. It is, however, true that not only critics, but also the votaries of Indian philosophy misunderstood the concept of *mokṣa* and it led to the cardinal mistake of treating the external world as evil.

One more objection can be raised to *mokṣa.* Is *mokṣa* a meaningful ideal? In the first place *mokṣa* must be possible, and secondly, its realisation must be humanly possible. In the absence of either of them does it not cease to be meaningful? Let us assume that it is humanly possible to attain *mokṣa,* then it remains an ideal. But then nothing is lost. If we pursue an unattainable ideal, then we progress towards that ideal. What matters is progress. Plato's Utopia is an example which comes very close to the ideal of *mokṣa* in this respect. Progress in the right direction is true progress. There is no way to know if one can truly achieve mokṣa in one's lifetime, however all one can do is pursue a life towards mokṣa almost like an ideal which shall help one live a more morally fulfilling life.

In the western tradition only Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul. It became totally alien to modern western philosophy, though it found favour with Christianity. The Paradox is that immortality of the soul is a common theme to Christianity and Indian philosophy, whereas it ought to have been common to western philosophy and Christianity because the west happens to be the mainland of Christianity. It illustrates one crucial factor. Religion does not determine philosophy. On the other hand, philosophy has the required potential at least to influence religion, if not determine the same.

We saw that mokṣa, nirvāṇa, cessation of all kinds of misery are the goals of Indian philosophical schools. Some scholars say that Indian Philosophy has a soteriological purpose. But the idea that the central thought of Indian philosophy is soteriological purpose is not free from dispute. Some people consider it a philosophy of life and declare it philosophy on this basis, some declare it different from philosophy on the same basis. Indian Philosopher Bimal Kṛṣṇa Matilal considers it philosophy by establishing epistemology as the central element and

also considers it equivalent to Western philosophy, while Daya Kṛṣṇa declares it philosophy on the basis of "Conceptual Confusions and Conceptual Clarifications", that is, philosophy contemplates on concepts from arguments and so does Indian philosophy, that is the reason to call it *darśan* (philosophy).

Thus there are many ideas in this regard as to why Indian philosophy is philosophy. Although a detailed study can be done in this regard from the reference list and it is sufficient to state it here as an indication for this unit, so that whatever historical and characteristic description is done, there will remain no doubt as this is the only idea and it is accepted to all.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is 'quest of life' according to Indian Philosophy?

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2. Is Indian Philosophy pessimistic and escapist? Evaluate.

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

Philosophy is derived from two Greek words which mean love of knowledge or wisdom. In Indian tradition philosophy means Darśana or *tattva*. Indian outlook is essentially different from western outlook. In terms of problems there is no difference between Indian and western philosophical traditions. Indian philosophers perceived knowledge as power in a different perspective. Bacon regarded knowledge as the means to establish authority over the external world. On the other hand, Indians regarded knowledge as essential to establish control over one's own self. Indians recognized philosophy itself as a value. Therefore philosophy, in India, was accepted as a way of life. With the sole exception of the Cārvāka, all other systems of

philosophy in India accepted liberation in one or the other sense. Philosophy is independent of religion. However, religion may or may not be independent of philosophy.

2.6 KEY WORDS

Yāgas and **Yajñas:** Yagas and Yajñas are sacred rituals done to appease God, performed during the Vedic period.

Pessimism: Pessimism, from the Latin '*pessimus*' (worst), is a painful state of mind which negatively colours the perception of life, especially with regard to future events. Value judgments may vary dramatically between individuals, even when judgments of fact are undisputed.

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) The word '*darśana*' comes from the word *tattva* — the ultimate reality. This ultimate reality is the knowing reality. It not only describes the metaphysical component but also the epistemological component. However, the summation of both the components is necessary in describing *darśana.* Epistemological component is very important, since it involves knowing the ultimate reality. In the initial stage there was no distinction between reality and epistemic subject. Epistemologically knowledge became inward. In the course of time human related oneself to value and identify with the reality. So in Indian context, value is not regarded only to the subject matter of philosophy but philosophy itself is regarded as value.

2) In Indian context philosophy is understood as '*darśana*' -to see or to realize. This realization corresponds to that of knowledge. When we say that we are realizing a thing, it amounts to say that we have some sort of knowledge. This correspondence relationship is one to one and it is nearly isomorphic. *Tattva* stands for two words '*tat'* and '*tva'*. The etymological meaning of this word is 'you are that'. This mainly refers to the Ultimate reality in Indian philosophy. The word *darśana* stands for the ultimate reality and it is a knowing reality thus involving both metaphysical and epistemological components and satisfactorily explaining the description of *darśana* in Indian context.

Check Your Progress II

1) In the post-renaissance age Bacon propagated the famous dictum 'knowledge is power'. This principle changed forever the very direction of the evolution of science. But the ancient Indians never believed in this dictum. On the contrary, they performed *yāgas* to meet practical ends and *yajñas* to achieve spiritual gain. But in a strict sense, Indians regarded knowledge as power because for them knowledge was a way of life and this is the reason why for them knowledge was never intrinsic. However, it is necessary to look into the connotation of the word power. The Baconian 'power' was necessary to experience control over nature, but the Indian 'power' was supposed to be the instrument to subjugate one's own self to nature. This is the prime principle which forms the cornerstone of early *vedic* thought. This radical change in the meaning of the word 'power' also explains the difference in worldview which can be easily discerned when the belief-systems and attitudes of Indians and Europeans are compared and contrasted

2) In this regard, an analogy may clear the mist surrounding Indian philosophy. Western philosophy is not divided into Christian philosophy and Jewish philosophy, though all western philosophers (excluding Greek philosophers) in loose sense are either Christians or Jews. Likewise, it is highly inappropriate to talk about '*Hindu philosophy'*, though majority of Indian philosophers were 'committed' *Hindus*. It is true that a few philosophers in India became the heads of religious groups or sects (eg. Rāmānuja *or* Madhva*).* But then we have St. Augustine, St. Aquinas, etc. in the west also. But nobody characterizes their philosophy as Christian philosophy. But surely, we have Buddhist or Jaina philosophy because neither Buddhism nor Jainism is a religion in the strict sense of the term. At this point, a pertinent question arises, if there is Buddhist philosophy, then why not Hindu philosophy? To believe that there is such philosophy amounts to putting the cart in front of the horse. Philosophy in India did not originate from *Sanātana dharma* – or Hindu *dharma* as it is popularly known as – but it is the other way round.

Check your progress III

1) It is easy to discover a solution to this quest in Indian philosophy. However, it is not so easy to reach the same in western tradition (it is true that existentialism attempted the same, but it remained a sort of island and was obliterated by analytic tradition). The aim of life according to Indian tradition is to make a pilgrimage from 'misery to happiness'. This is a single thread which runs through the whole gamut of Indian philosophy. At one point of time, vertical split occurred in philosophical tradition leading to the birth of orthodox and heterodox schools of thought. However, they concur on one issue, i.e., the aim of life. The dispute between these two poles did not prevent them from embracing a common goal-misery to happiness.

2) This criticism draws support from two sources of error shows the degree of misunderstanding. First, the desire to escape from misery was misconstrued as the desire to escape from the external world. Second, it discourages earthly pleasure. Let us consider the second source first. Negation of earthly pleasure is not tantamount to the negation of happiness because pleasure and happiness are, evidently, different. *Mokṣa* is simply the Sanskrit version of happiness. Pleasure is not only momentary but also is not pure in the sense that pleasure always comes with pain. If we consider Bentham's criteria, then these criteria satisfy not pleasure but happiness. Duration, intensity and purity do not, in reality, characterize pleasure but happiness. Perhaps proximity alone satisfies pleasure. If so, even from a practical standpoint any philosophy which regards *mokṣa* as ideal ceases to be pessimistic.

Now let us turn to the first source. Desire to escape from this world describes the mindset of an escapist. There are references to rebirth. Rebirth may only be a myth and something beyond verification. But when attainment of *mokṣa* is regarded as a possibility during the lifespan of an individual (this is what is called *jīvanmukti*), there is no reason to regard the external world as an evil. It is, however, true that not only critics, but also the votaries of Indian philosophy misunderstood the concept of *mokṣa* and it led to the cardinal mistake of treating external world as evil.

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UNIT 3 WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: CHARACTERISTICS, PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES*

Structure

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Ancient western philosophy

3.3 Medieval Western Philosophy

3.4 Modern western philosophy

3.5 Contemporary western philosophy

3.6 Let us sum up

3.7 Key Words

3.8 Further Readings and References
3.9 Answers to check your progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we attempt at presenting an overview of Western Philosophies. This unit is intended to achieve the following aims, from a synthetic point of view. By the end of this unit, you should be able to get familiar:

- with the different themes, running through the history of Western Philosophy.
- with the different schools, which fall under the broad category called Western philosophy.
- with the common problems in the field of knowledge, search for meaning, ethics and politics faced by the different schools.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Alfred North Whitehead, eminent Process Philosopher and Mathematician once stated that the entire Western Philosophy was a footnote to Plato. Given the fact that Plato

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carried forward many of the philosophical concerns his predecessors and left his imprint on the whole of the subsequent development of Western thought, the observation of Whitehead on Plato seems in place. What is to be noted however is that, what was stated by Whitehead about Plato's philosophical impact on posterity, can be said of any other philosopher too, to a certain extent. This is because, philosophy is a pluralistic enterprise, dialectical in its nature and process.

When we say that pluralistic enterprise, we mean that philosophers approach reality and the problems posed by it, from their own historical contexts and perspectives. When we state that philosophy is a dialectical enterprise, we mean that in it, there is interplay of the opposites, giving rise to a new ideas and phenomena.

In this Unit, we shall try to capture the dialectical interplay play of ideas, in the history of Western Philosophies. We shall also try to take note of the pluralism of approaches to different philosophical problems. In the process, we shall also appreciate the underlying unity of concerns, which are always present, throughout the course of the History of Philosophies, in spite of the differences in their professed perspectives.

3.2 ANCIENT WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Ancient Western Philosophy is also known as **Greco-Roman Philosophy** or **Greek philosophy**, because it started in Greece, or rather with the proto-Greek people. Ancient Western Philosophy is also known as **"Greek Miracle"**. This Maritime colonial power began to flower as a centre of thought and creativity that it became a mark of all future thinking.

'Ancient' is a relative term. Usually it refers to things, events, persons, time which are removed from as in the past. AWP refers to the pioneers, the first to go and venture in a new field or territory. They were daring thinkers, who were ready to look at problems afresh, searching for new solutions.

Greece is considered as the cradle of Western thought:

1. Geographical conditions

The external beauty or natural environment was so favorable for their thinking. They made them wonder about the creation of the universe.

2. Cultural Interaction

Greeks having many harbors they could develop trade with surrounding nations or countries. People, who came for trade, brought with them their literature and culture. These helped Greece to interact with other nations. They had the possibility of knowing each other. This factor led to the universal thinking in Greece.

3. Political and Economic security

There was no poverty, disturbance or troubles. They had no political and economic botheration. The stable political life, flourishing democracy and abundance of leisure

time helped create favourable conditions towards philosophizing.

4. Myths and Legends

They had many myths. The country was blessed with mythical views from which they could draw inspiration. The myths tried to convey truths about the realities of life.

5. Religious Freedom

They were free to worship whichever gods they liked.

6. Extroverts

The people of Greece were generally extroverts, who were sociable and other-centered.

1. Here they gave more importance to search for wisdom (connected with wonder).
2. Philosophers like Plato and Socrates emphasized the search for wisdom and others like Aristotle emphasized on the very aspect of wisdom.
3. Ancient people were amazed at the different realities of nature. This wonder forced them to search for wisdom.

The principal philosophical issues were: the nature of visible reality (changing or unchanging/ being or becoming of reality/order and harmony of the physical world); the unifying principle of multifaceted universe (arché) - the world-stuff; affirmation of the desire and capacity to know the intrinsic nature of the external world; the rational (moral) nature of human beings in the society; the place of human beings in the vast universe. The final result is: acknowledgement of the immensity of the physical universe and the inability of man to comprehend the whole reality. The chief proponents were non-believers and polytheists thinkers; their 'belief' did not affect their human speculations

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the central issues of the Ancient Western Philosophy?

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3.3 MEDIEVAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Medieval philosophy is the philosophy of Europe and the Middle East in the era now known as Medieval or the Middle Ages, the period roughly extending from the decline of classical culture and the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance. "The Middle Ages" refers to the period of European history from the end of the Roman Empire in Italy until the Renaissance, i.e. from the 5th century A.D. until the 15th.

Philosophers during this time include Boethius, Anselm, Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and many others. During the 12th and 13th

centuries European philosophy was much influenced by the writings of Muslim philosophers including Avicenna (ibn Sina) and Averroes (ibn Rushd). Philosophy in the medieval style continued into the late seventeenth century. Descartes and Leibniz cannot be well understood without some knowledge of medieval thought. It is defined partly by the process of rediscovering the ancient culture developed in Greece and Rome in the classical period, and partly by the need to address theological problems and to integrate sacred doctrine and secular learning. Medieval philosophy was decisively influenced by ideas from the Greece, the East, and the patristic period, from the Jewish philosophical tradition and from Islam. The main problematic of Medieval Western philosophy is the relation between faith and reason. It is during this period, that Christians came in contact with Greek philosophy.

Medieval philosophy in general could be called a Christian philosophy. Christian philosophy is a term to describe the fusion of various fields of philosophy, historically derived from the philosophical traditions of Western thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle, with the theological doctrines of Christianity. Christian philosophy originated during the Middle Ages as medieval theologians attempted to demonstrate to the religious authorities that Greek philosophy and Christian faith were, in fact, compatible methods for arriving at divine truth. The chief proponents were Christian thinkers – philosophers and theologians.

The problems discussed throughout this period were the relation of faith to reason, the existence and unity of God, the object of theology and Metaphysics, and the problems of knowledge, of universals, and of individuation. The chief philosophical reflection was around man's relationship with other human beings, the world, and God. It was a period of 'tension' between philosophy and theology of major monotheistic religions. Often philosophical categories were made use of to explain theology, under the inspiration of 'revealed truths'. During this era philosophy became a system, with well-established schools. The Catholic Authority had the last word on the authenticity of philosophical reflections. It emphasizes on the necessity and importance of man's openness to transcendent reality in order to comprehend truth.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the central philosophical issues of Medieval Western Philosophy?

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3.4 MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

The focus of Modern Western philosophy was reason. This period was marked by

separation of philosophy from theology and separation of philosophy from science. There are three main schools of philosophies, that of *Rationalism, Empiricism* and *Transcendentalism.* Rationalism was trying to give importance to reason. Method they used was deductive method. Important philosophers of this school were Rene Descartes, the father of modern western philosophy, Pascal, Spinoza and Leibniz. Empiricism spoke about sense knowledge. The method of philosophizing was inductive method. Locke, Berkeley and Hume are eminent thinkers of this school. Transcendentalism tried to bring about a synthesis between Rationalism and Empiricism. Immanuel Kant is the main figure of this school.

Etymologically, Renaissance means rebirth, renewal or awaking etc. It starts from about 1450 and stretches for hundred years. It starts with the fall of Constantine to Turks and inventing of the printing machine. Printing helped towards the faster dissemination of ideas. Renaissance is also known as "age of adventure".

Renaissance had much to give to philosophy as it developed the thinking patterns of the people. It led to the growth of humanism i.e. a belief in man, a passion for learning, an emphasis on scholarly exactness, value of human being, his nature, his power etc., which had much influenced post-Kantian philosophers. Renaissance also led to geographical discoveries, development in art and literature, change of idea on religious thinking and development of political and economical views.

Enlightenment is the term used to describe the trends in thought and letters in Europe and the American colonies during the 18th century prior to the French Revolution. The phrase was frequently employed by writers of the period itself, convinced that they were emerging from centuries of darkness and ignorance into a new age enlightened by reason, science, and a respect for humanity.

More than a set of fixed ideas, the Enlightenment implied an attitude, a method of thought. Given the motto of the age, "Dare to know", a desire arose to reexamine and question all received ideas and values, to explore new ideas in many different directions—hence the inconsistencies and contradictions that often appear in the writings of 18th-century thinkers.

Rationalism

This school of philosophy mainly concentrated on the reason of human being. Important philosopher in rationalism, Descartes used *Methodic Doubt* to arrive at the reality. For him the truth is "what can be clearly and distinctly thought of." He considered man as a thinking thing. He says, "I think, therefore, I am" this is called famous **Cogito, ergo sum, i.e. primacy of consciousness.** They believed in innate ideas and later Kant remarks that they were too dogmatic about metaphysics. They tried to give definite, pristine shape to the reality with the help of reason. They had also attempted to prove God's existence.

Empiricism

Empiricism is the view that all knowledge is derived from experience. They deny the innate ideas. Empiricism was mostly held by British philosophers who lived from 16^{th} century to 18^{th} century, running parallel with continental philosophers. Main theories

like skepticism, enlightenment, deism, pragmatism and utilitarian ethics etc. came about because of empiricism. Locke, who held that sense knowledge alone is real and denied innate ideas and Hume, who subordinated reason to instinct and sense experience were the leading figures of this school. Kant remarks that they were too skeptic about the knowledge. They did not attempt to know the metaphysical realities. As result, they ended in skepticism.

Transcendental Idealism

Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher is the founder of Transcendentalism who tried to bring about a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. Kant speaks of impossibility and possibility of metaphysics. In his book *Critic of Pure Reason* he says that metaphysics is impossible because we cannot reach nowhere about the knowledge of God, nature, soul, freedom etc. with scientific knowledge. Thus, metaphysics is impossible. However, in his second book *Critic of Practical Reason* he concludes that metaphysic is possible, because it is a natural disposition, which ultimately leads us in search of destiny.

Post Kantian philosophy

Continental modern philosophy is a significant strand Western philosophy. It was a culmination of the social, cultural and economical developments that developed European society. Reformation of traditions, abolishment of tradition and giving up religious thinking and humanistic approach towards philosophy were the main characteristic of this era.

We have Subjective Idealism of Fichte i.e. self or ego or subject or spirit was alone real, Objective Idealism of Shelling i.e. nature is the commander of the reality and Absolute Idealism of Hegel i.e. unity of spirit and nature. They introduced dialectical method. It is a method of reaching the reality in three steps.

Thesis ⇨ antithesis ⇨ synthesis

E.g. Private interest ⇨ Public interest ⇨ State

Voluntaristic idealism of Schopenhauer i.e. "human being is the will to live".

3.5 CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

If Modern Western Philosophy reached the astronomical heights of reason, the locus of Contemporary Western Philosophy was about discovering the meaning of human existence. It analyzed the existence of human being in a concrete and practical way, seeing existence as something grounded and caught up in concrete situations of life.

Contemporary Western Philosophy is a journey in which, we visit many schools of Philosophical thought to be arrived in theory and to be lived in action beginning from Pragmatism to Post- Modernism. Let us survey each of the schools of thought in brief.

Pragmatism: It is the starting point of journey that emphasizes the importance of action over doctrine, experience over fixed principles, meaning of the ideas reside in the

practical consequences and proclaims ideas as the instruments of action. In simple words, it is a philosophy of action. The main exponents of this school are William James, Charles S. Pierce, and John Dewey. What is noteworthy about this school is that it recognized the relative, contingent and fallible character of human reason.

Phenomenology: It is a century old international movement in philosophy. In the 18th century, Johann Henrich applied it in his theory of epistemology to distinguish truth from error and in 19th century, Hegel used it to trace the development of human spirit from mere sense experience to absolute knowledge. However, it is with Edumund Husserl, that it took its present shape and proposed it as a technique for describing things as they appear to conscience. In simple words, it is a method of approaching the phenomena in its pure state. The main exponents were Edumund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Martin Heidegger, the student of Edmund Husserl, diverged from the thought and methodology of his master and gave an existential and hermeneutical turn to phenomenology.

Analytic Philosophy/ Linguistic Philosophy: It brought into light that language is not a neutral tool that serves to depict ready-made reality, instead is an active player in the very understanding and grasping of a reality. The main exponent of this school, Ludwig Wittgenstein clarified that function of philosophy was to clarify language through an analysis of words. Other exponents are A J. Ayer, Rudolf Carnap, Frege and Bertrand Russel. This school had two main branches, namely, Logical Positivism and Logical Empiricism. Logical Positivists held the Verification Theory as key to their analysis of language. It stated that a proposition was either verifiable or falsifiable and if it could not either of these criteria, it was nonsensical. Together with the verification theory, they also held the Picture Theory of language, which assumed that language was an exact mirroring of or a one-to-one correspondence of reality. Logical Empiricism questioned the Verification Theory, as well as the Picture theory of Language, stating that each of languages was a game, and there was a Family resemblance between different games. Wittgenstein, in the earlier stages of his thought was a Logical Positivist, who later on evolved himself to be a Logical Empiricist reality, affect each other and reality is in a dynamic process, and at the same time, is dependent. The main exponent of this school is Alfred North Whitehead.

Philosophy of Life**:** It started in France and Germany. For materialists reality = matter, for idealists reality = idea and for life philosophers reality = life. The main exponents of this school are Henri Bergson, Fredrich Nietzsche, Maurice Blondel, Teilhard de Chardin, and Victor Frankl. According to this school, the secret of the world is in movement rather than in the material things. For Henri Bergson dynamism of life is movement moving from past to present which advances into the future, for Nietzsche living out values and will to become make life dynamic, for Teilhard dynamism of life is immersing the human self in the process of evolution and become Christ realized being and Victor Frankl dynamism of life is making and producing meaningfulness in human life.

Existentialism: Kierkegaard combines the Individualism of Marx and Emotionalism of Shelling that gave rise to Existentialism, and thus became the father of Existentialism. It deals with the varied themes of life, authenticity and inauthenticity of existence, inter-subjectivity, estrangement, alienation, absurdity, homelessness, depersonalization,

dehumanization, objectification, and the eclipse of God. It stresses the aspect of freedom, precedence of existence over essence, personal responsibility, free will and the good of the many individuals. The main exponents of the school of Existentialism are Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and Martin Heidegger.

Philosophical Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. Philosophical Hermeneutics broadens this understanding of interpretation to include all human understanding as a journey and process of interpretation. The main exponents of Philosophical Hermeneutics are Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricouer.

Postmodernism: Postmodernism is a contemporary intellectual movement that had begun in the West and now it affects the entire world. It focuses on the periphery, as contrasted to the centre – of events, meaning and ideologies, critiques human reason and presence of human self to itself as a Representation and affirms plurality of the locations of knowledge and meaning and multiplicity of selves. The main promoters of the Postmodernism are Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille, Jean Baudrillard, Michael Foucault, and Jean-Francis Lyotard

Process Philosophy: It is a 20th century school of philosophy that rejects Parmenides' notion of being, its permanence and emphasizes the Heraclitus' idea of change and Aristotle's theory of becoming. It stands on the ground that events make up.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the special contribution of Contemporary Western Philosophy to human being?

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

The task we undertook in this unit was basically an overview of Western Philosophies. We approached this process from a chronological point of view, namely, ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary western philosophies. This task could have been approached from the perspective of Kant, who summed up the entire philosophical project, under the three questions, "What can I know", "What should I do" and "What Can I hope for?"

Human beings exist in the world and with the world. They are also capable of asking questions about themselves and the reality, in which and with which they exist. They have been asking the question about the primordial stuff of reality. The basic philosophical question has been "Why there is something rather than nothing?" All questions about reality are also questions about ourselves and the way we interpret our knowledge about reality. All philosophy of every age and place has to return to this primordial or fundamental question. The history of Western Philosophies bears testimony to the fact the

questioning capacity and nature of human beings, especially under the basic thrust of Skepticism, Idealism, Rationalism and, positivism. All questions of philosophy, we have seen in the above overview, are also existential questions.

3.7 KEY WORDS

Myth: Myth is an imaginative story with a philosophical or theological orientation.

Ortodoxis: Orthodoxis means right teaching or doctrine.

Orthopraxis: Orthopraxis means right practice.

3.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. The principal philosophical issues were: the nature of visible reality, the unifying principle of multifaceted universe,; affirmation of the desire and capacity to know the intrinsic nature of the external world; the rational nature of human beings, the place of human beings in the universe, acknowledgement of the immensity of the physical universe and the inability of man to comprehend the whole reality. The chief proponents were non-believers and polytheists thinkers; their 'belief' did not affect their human speculations.

Check your progress II

1. The problems discussed throughout this period are the relation of faith to reason, the existence and unity of God, the object of theology and Metaphysics, and the problems of knowledge, of universals, and of individuation. The chief philosophical reflection is around man's relationship with other human beings, the world, and God. It is a period of 'tension' between philosophy and theology of major monotheistic religions. Often philosophical categories were made use of to explain theology, under the inspiration of 'revealed truths'. During this era philosophy became a system, with well-established schools. The Catholic Authority had the last word on the authenticity of philosophical reflections. It emphasizes on the necessity and importance of man's openness to transcendent reality in order to comprehend truth.

Check your progress III

1. The special contribution of Contemporary Western Philosophy to human being is that, the philosophers of this period concentrated on discovering the meaning of human existence. It analyzed the existence of human being in a concrete and practical way. In simple words, Contemporary Western Philosophy is a shift from orthodoxis to orthopraxis.